**in·fer·ence project day one**

**Essential question: How does literature reflect culture?**

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***noun***

**1.**

the act or process of inferring.

**2.**

something that is inferred: *to make rash inferences.*

**3.**

*Logic* .

**a.**

the process of deriving the strict logical consequences of assumed premises.

**b.**

the process of arriving at some conclusion that, though it is not logically derivable from the assumed premises, possesses some degree of probability relative to the premises.

**c.**

a proposition reached by a process of inference.

Making inferences takes logic and reason. We make inferences about people all the time: by the way people dress, speak or act we make conclusions about them that while perhaps not factually correct are certainly probable. Literature allows us to do the same thing; through literature, we can come to conclusions about the beliefs of the authors and the culture he or she may represent.

Myths are usually the primary literature of cultures; myths were often created before cultures became fully literate. Myths were used to teach lessons, explain the physical world or share religion and morality. Myths were unique to the cultures from which they came. Consider the creation myth in Genesis, looking at the first few chapters from the Bible:

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| --- |
| 1 In the beginning [God](http://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=5217) created [heaven](http://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=5593) and earth. |
| 2 Now the earth was a formless void, there was darkness over the deep, with a divine wind sweeping over the waters. |
| 3 God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. |
| 4 God saw that light was good, and [God](http://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=5217) divided light from darkness. |
| 5 God called light 'day', and darkness he called 'night'. Evening came and morning came: the first day. |
| 6 God said, 'Let there be a vault through the middle of the waters to divide the waters in two.' And so it was. |
| 7 God made the vault, and it divided the waters under the vault from the waters above the vault. |
| 8 God called the vault 'heaven'. Evening came and morning came: the second day. |

What inferences can be made about the ancient Jewish culture from this excerpt? What logical conclusions about the religion, the way of life, etc. can you make?

For this project, you will given a creation myth from a culture that we will not name. In groups, you will read the myth and try to make inferences (logical conclusions) about the culture from which it originated. Try to answer as many of these questions as you can:

1. Can you infer anything about the climate, geopgraphy and environment of this culture?
2. Can you infer anything about the society’s hierarchy, classes and politics?
3. Can you infer anything about the gender roles in society?
4. Can you infer anything about the rules for how children treat their parents and elders?
5. Can you infer anything about the relationship between humans and gods or goddesses?
6. Can you infer anything about the economics of this society: was this an agrarian or nomadic society, for instance?
7. Can you infer anything about this society’s values , rules of conduct or religious customs?
8. Can you infer anything about this society’s sense of justice?

Once you have recorded your thoughts to this on a piece of paper, you will be placed in groups. Groups share your thoughts and then create list of the top five inferences you feel fairly confident can be supported by the myth. Place each member of the group’s name on the paper and turn it in to the teacher. (5 points)

**in·fer·ence project day two**

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Yesterday, you were placed in groups and read a myth from a culture which was never named. You created a list of the top five inferences your group made based on that myth. Today, you will test those conclusions based on research.

First, I will return the lists of inferences to you, placing the name of the culture on the top of it. Please return to your groups and be ready to move to the library, were Mrs. Meyers will help you find solid information about the different cultures. Your job is to research the culture and then, based on 30 minutes of research as a group, grade your conclusions as a group. Using the red pen I provide, give your group a grade and then write a one-paragraph explanation as a group of that grade. NOTE: you will not be given points based on the grade you assign; rather, the points will be given based on your explanation. Your explanations need to show evidence of research, refer to at least one website and analyze the accuracy of your inferences from day one. This is worth a total of 10 points and is a group grade. Turn this in.

Next, find an additional myth from your culture to complete your homework. Your homework is to then write a one-paragraph reflection about your myth in which you use what you found out about the culture in your classwork today to explain how this myth reflects the culture. Points will be 15 (5 for evidence of research and information about the culture, 5 for analysis of the myth and 5 for quality of writing). This is an individual project and will be due next class.